

## ***Message from Commissioner Nancy Navarretta***



As we gather with family and friends this week to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, it is a good time to reflect upon the importance of community. These past few years have been unlike any before in that we have endured concurrent crises—the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing opioid crisis and the increases in people reporting emotional distress. Though the consequences touched us as individuals, we endured these events together as a community. And it was our community that banded together to help support one another.

Here, we are connected through our community of practice, working towards the common goal of promoting the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs. I am thankful for, and continually impressed by, the hard work and perseverance of behavioral healthcare workers. I am thankful for our community of people in recovery who provide us with repeated reminders of what strength and determination look like. We are thankful for the message they carry: that there is hope, and that recovery is possible and it is within reach.

I hope during this Thanksgiving holiday you will each take a moment to consider what community means to you and the ways in which we are blessed by the various communities we inhabit. While we have faced many challenges, let us contemplate the ways in which that adversity has highlighted our good fortune and the myriad things for which to be thankful. I wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe Thanksgiving holiday. Thank you for being a part of our team.

### **New DMHAS Partnership with Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference**

DMHAS has established a new partnership with the Connecticut Association of Schools – Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CAS-CIAC) to provide mental health and substance use resources to high school students, athletic directors, coaches, and parents. [This partnership](#) will increase access to critical resources for both preventing and responding to youth mental health and substance use issues. Partnering with the CAS-CIAC provides an opportunity for DMHAS to share vital information with families, youth, and people who interact consistently with youth through athletics. More than half of Connecticut high school students participate in some form of athletics.

Connecticut high school student leadership, athletic directors, parents, and coaches will receive information to help identify and provide resources to students in a possible mental health or substance use crisis. DMHAS and the [Connecticut Clearinghouse](#) will also provide educational information about preventing teen use of opioids, cannabis, and alcohol, as well as the inherent dangers of each substance.

As part of this partnership, DMHAS' mental health and substance use information will be included in the new coaches' certification program for the CIAC. DMHAS will also have a presence at CIAC Championship events and a monthly social media feature highlighting an outstanding Connecticut high school coach. For more information, please contact [Kelley Edwards](#).

## Sequential Intercept Model Mapping

Alicia Feller, CEO of Southwest Connecticut Mental Health System (SWCMHS), and Captain Edward Weihe, Fairfield Police Department Field Services Commander, recently facilitated a pilot research collaborative developed and driven by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [Forensic Services Division](#).

The research collaborative, called SIM (Sequential Intercept Model Mapping), is the first of its kind in Connecticut, and includes stakeholders from a wide range of disciplines and providers from state and local mental health and addiction resources, hospitals, universities, criminal justice systems, and parole. The collaborative conducted a two day workshop at the Fairfield Police Department, and analyzed a virtual pathway of individuals who have been arrested, adjudicated, and released, while experiencing co-occurring mental health and/or substance use disorders throughout the process. The goal of analyzing this process is to identify gaps in immediate services and long-term care, to brainstorm and prioritize solutions, and to engage in construction and implementation of those identified solutions. The overall objective is to reduce recidivism, suicides, and deaths by overdose by making basic needs for survival and recovery readily available.

The Fairfield Police Department will remain partnered with DMHAS and the research collaborative to participate in continued problem solving, and to measure progress and success. For more information about this new initiative, please contact [Alicia Feller](#).





## City of New Haven Launches Elm City COMPASS Program



After two years in the making, the Elm City COMPASS program officially launched this month. City of New Haven first responders now will be supported by a social worker and a peer support specialist to assist residents who struggle with mental health, drug, alcohol and housing crises. This new unarmed response team will respond to 911 calls focusing on crisis intervention and social services.

The benefits of the program are numerous, including fewer injuries to people in crisis and responders, reductions in calls for service due to improved access to mental health care, decreased need for costly emergency call outs, and improved community relations.

The team consists of six New Haven residents and a 21-member community advisory board, with city-based nonprofit [Continuum of Care](#) leading the response effort. The pilot phase of Elm City COMPASS will operate seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. - the timeframe when the city gets the highest call volume for incidents that might warrant social services - with a plan to expand to 16 hours per day in July 2023.

DMHAS is proud to support this initiative by offering consultation and expertise during the planning phase and continually seeks to strengthen partnerships with communities to expand access to Mobile Crisis Response as well as mental health services and supports.

## Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) Campaign



If you find that you are drinking more to manage stress, it may be time to reach for support and help.

Visit [CTStronger.org](https://CTStronger.org) for TIPS and RESOURCES.

**CTSTRONGER**



Women's bodies are affected by alcohol differently than men's are. If you started drinking more during the pandemic to manage stress, you may be drinking a lot more than is healthy.

Learn more about women and alcohol at [CTStronger.org](https://CTStronger.org)

**CTSTRONGER**



During the pandemic, drinking among adults increased 54%, with a 17% increase among women alone. Some of the reasons for this increase include greater accessibility, effects of lockdowns on stress and anxiety, and economic insecurity or job loss. Combine this with the rapidly approaching holiday season, and we may find that increased alcohol use can play a bigger role in the festivities than we would like.

Through the AUD awareness campaign, DMHAS is working to provide information on safer alcohol use, associated health risks, and resources available for help. The campaign will feature digital billboards and bus ads, radio, social and digital media, as well as further articles and resources hosted on [CTStronger.com](https://CTStronger.com).

Campaign goals include raising awareness about increased alcohol use, offering basic tools and information to individuals who have increased consumption and providing treatment and contact information to individuals with AUD that would benefit from treatment.



How much is too much? Check your drinking with the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test, an interactive self-test

If you or a loved one want to stop drinking but need help to do it, call the Access Line 800-563-4086.

